

# Work-Related Asthma

## Facts on Work-Related or Occupational Asthma

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], adult asthma accounts for over 10 million missed work days annually. Additionally, many adults miss work to care for children with asthma (approximately 12.8 million school days are missed annually due to asthma).
- Estimates show that up to 15% of asthma cases have job-related factors.
- Work-related asthma may develop for the first time in a previously undiagnosed adult, existing asthma may be aggravated by triggers in the workplace, or childhood asthma may recur due to workplace exposures.
- Asthma is the most prevalent work-related lung disease in developed countries.

## What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease of the lungs characterized by airway inflammation and airway obstruction, which are triggered by reactions to stimuli. Asthma triggers include dust mites, cockroaches, animal dander, mold, pollen, tobacco smoke, and exercise. Not everyone with asthma has the same triggers. Common symptoms of asthma include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness.

## Asthma in Indiana

Asthma is a very common chronic illness with 8.2% of Hoosier adults and 8.4% of Hoosier children currently suffering from the disease. This places a strain on our health care system, employers and schools with absenteeism and lost productivity, and the quality of life of those with asthma and their caregivers. Though asthma can not be cured, it can be controlled by taking medications properly and avoiding asthma triggers.

## Ways to reduce asthma triggers in the workplace:

- Maintain a smoke-free facility. Secondhand smoke and the chemicals left behind on clothing, hair and furniture can trigger an attack.
- Do not block air vents or grilles. Proper ventilation and air circulation are important to maintaining good indoor air quality.
- Report water leaks immediately. Controlling moisture and humidity are critical to reducing mold growth.
- Store food and dispose of garbage properly to avoid a pest problem. If cockroaches are found, use baits or traps instead of pesticide sprays.
- Avoid products with strong odors when possible. If certain products with strong odors are unavoidable, special ventilation procedures may be needed or products may need to be used when sensitive individuals are not present.

Data collected from the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Environmental Protection Agency.